

Floral Street School Council
Meeting Minutes: February 4, 2003

In attendance: Joe Sawyer, Jane Lizotte, Bob Wilson, Gina-Marie Kelly, Kathy Rivenburg, Karmen Bogdesic, Sue Campos, Sandy Fryc, Maribeth Boisvert, Larry Lynch, Vicky Proch and Deborah Peeples

- Deborah Peeples attended the meeting as a community representative. She was not attending in her official capacity as a member of the Shrewsbury School Committee. She came to discuss the current state of affairs in the district in light of the ongoing budget concerns.
- The budget situation for the district is expected to be difficult for '03 and an even worse budget picture is expected for '04.
- The current budget being presented to the School Committee has no new initiatives in it and some cuts already, including reducing instructional aide positions and some specialist positions in the district. If the budget is level funded, additional monies could be raised through taxes, but not all would be allocated to the schools. There is the possibility that due to this situation, changes to the current program could occur.
- Joe Sawyer reported that as of 1/31/03 the State had issued a cease and desist order for the schools literacy grant. Planning was in place to use these funds for professional development. These plans were stopped immediately.
- The group had an open discussion regarding the possibility of fees for transportation and athletics fees. Some did not agree to a charge for busing but were not opposed to athletic fees. Ms. Peeples advised the group that it is not state mandated to provide transportation for grades 9-12. It was also pointed out that the Town of Shrewsbury pays for a lot of extra transportation such as winter buses and late buses as well.
- Mr. Sawyer advised that he has "site based management funds" that are used for professional development, school supplies and office supplies. This is an area of possible cuts.
- The group agreed that the budget would most likely need to be streamlined. An issue that needed to be resolved by the district as a whole was what the responsibilities of the town and the parents were when it comes to supplying students with supplies, etc.
- A concern for the group was the possibility of cutting instructional aide jobs. These positions are seen as essential to the smooth running of not only the classrooms, but the school as a whole.
- The group discussed the possibility of cuts in programs deemed "not essential." Discussion centered on Media, Health, Art, Music, Phys Ed, Spanish instruction and Tech Specialists. At the elementary level, only Physical Education is mandated, although the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks speak to all of these areas. This was a philosophical

discussion designed to provide Mr. Sawyer with the Council's perspectives so that during ongoing budget discussions he has a sense of constituents' concerns.

- The group discussed not wanting to do away with these programs and the possibility of incorporating them into the daily classroom. Also, fees could be used for students wishing to have musical instrument lessons. In regards to technical instruction, it was mentioned that a significant amount of the specialists' time is spent assisting with equipment issues, etc. It was suggested that at this level, students and parents are much more adapt at using computers. Also, tech support for the town could possibly utilize an off-site service for tech support of systems and equipment.
- The main issue at the elementary level is facing budget cuts or increase in class sizes. As a town, low class size appears to remain a high priority.
- The group agreed that the program as a whole should be assessed to determine what the desired core values are. What is truly needed over the perception of what children need to have a solid education? Where can cuts are made with the least affect on the educational program?
- Joe announced that Curriculum Specialist, Terri Caffelle has accepted a Principal position in Oxford.
- Communication with Parents: the issue of timely communication with parents concerning incidents that occur at the school was discussed. Joe advised that he will be mindful of when/what information to dispense to parents, however this can depend on confidentiality issues, etc.
- Falcon Facts: Kathy discussed the technology to be used for Falcon Facts. Several of the parents had gone to the web site and took the tests to see what the students would be using. Consensus was favorable. A positive aspect was that the new format did not "time" the students. The emphasis was on learning the math facts as opposed to speed. Kathy advised that there would be an attempt to perfect the program for spring in order to create a welcoming program. Issues involved how and in what manner to proceed with the new format.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 4, 2003 7:00pm – 8:30pm, Floral Media Center